



NATIONAL WEATHER  
SERVICE -  
SEATTLE/TACOMA

# SKYWARN® Spotter News

[www.weather.gov/seattle](http://www.weather.gov/seattle)

WINTER 2016/2017

## Is it La Niña or Neutral for this Winter?

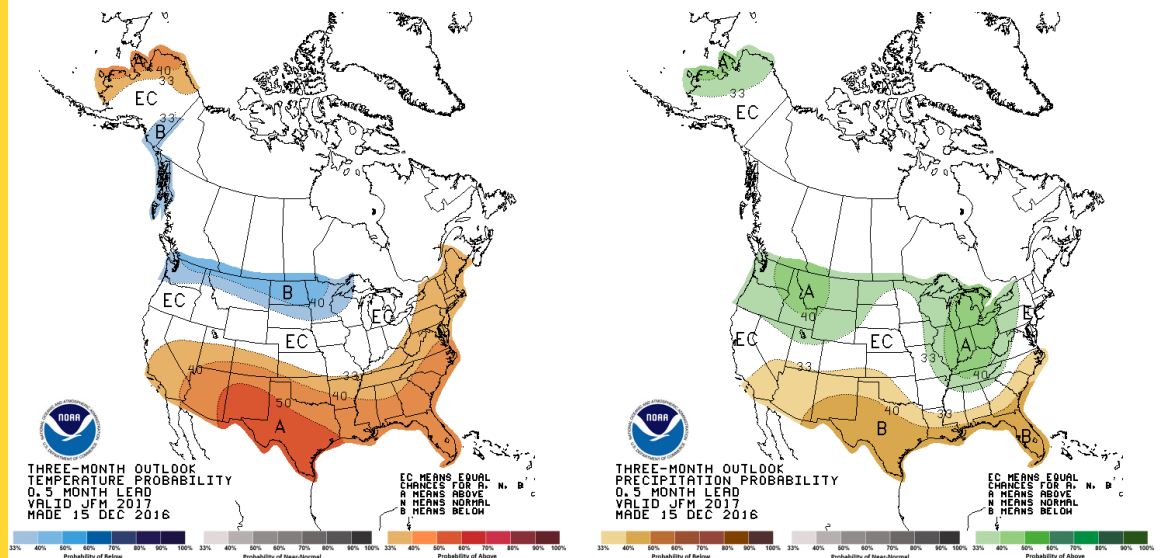
The eastern Pacific Ocean tropical waters this summer and fall have been varying between the cool side of neutral conditions or the mild side of La Niña. The latest trend early in December has been just below the -0.5 degree Celsius below average sea surface temperatures for weak La Niña conditions. The sea surface temperature guidance for these tropical waters trends toward more neutral conditions by the start of spring.

What does all this mean for our weather this winter season? For the prime winter months of January through March 2017, the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center has placed greater odds on cooler than average temperatures and wetter than average precipitation for Western Washington.

This phenomenon also tends to produce a good mountain snowpack. The mountain snowpack usually peaks around April 1st. By then, it is anticipated the mountain snowpack will close to or above average. [...cont page 4](#)

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3 month (Jan, Feb, Mar) temperature and precipitation outlook

Source: NWS Climate Prediction Center



*Do you own a home weather station? If so, join CWOP!*

## Citizen Weather Observing Program—CWOP

Do you own a home weather station? Is Santa going to leave this weather station under the tree for you? If so, join CWOP or the Citizen Weather Observing Program.

CWOP is a system that permits those with automated weather stations to report their data on-line to a suite of weather observation web sites. A growing number of SKYWARN weather spotters are taking advantage of this opportunity. If you have, or get, an automated weather station linked to your personal computer combined with broadband or DSL communications, please visit [www.wxqa.com](http://www.wxqa.com) for more information if you are interested in joining the CWOP team.

In addition, you can view CWOP and all other on-line weather stations on our web site by visiting our web site at [www.weather.gov/seattle](http://www.weather.gov/seattle) and click on the 'Observations' link. You will be amazed at the number of sites already posted there and yours could be among them, offering yet another piece to the weather observation puzzle. As you know, our area's weather is terrain driven and these reports clearly show that is the case.

## Spotter Training Update

SKYWARN Weather Spotter Training this fall was held in Mason, Pierce, King counties as well as the cities of Issaquah and Maple Valley, and Federal Way and the Green River Valley cities. Over 100 people attended these sessions. For new spotters, welcome aboard the SKYWARN Weather Spotter team! We look forward to your weather spotter reports this winter and beyond. More spotter training is planned for 2017. So look for spotter training announcements either in your mailbox or via our web site at [www.weather.gov/seattle](http://www.weather.gov/seattle) under the 'Add'l Observations' then 'Weather Spotters' link or the home-page headline.

## How to Measure Snow

Want a refresher on how to measure snow? You can review this process via the training link at [www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org). Yet, let's summarize it here.

First, use two pieces (roughly 2' x 2') of plywood or the like, to use as snow boards, or use the boards we have provided at spotter training recently. One piece can be used to measure total snow and the other for 'new' snow since the last measurement. Paint them both white in color so they will not absorb the sun's heat energy.

Place the two snow boards in an open area away from tall obstructions, likely close to your rain gauge. Be sure to 'flag' both boards so you can find them once they are snow-covered, and have a ruler, yardstick, or the snow stake provided at spotter training handy.

Snow boards provide much more accurate snow measuring platforms than using your deck, lawn or driveway. You're welcome to measure snowfall as often as you wish. It should be measured at least once or twice a day, such as first thing in the morning and then the evening, and shortly after a period of snowfall has ended to determine new snow totals. Contact us when you get one inch or more per hour, or 4" in 12 hours per our spotter criteria. Now, let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!

## Winter Weather Emergency Car Kit

Does your vehicle have a winter weather emergency kit? Here are some items to include in your kit:

- |                          |  |                         |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| •Jumper cables           | •Cat litter or sand (snow/ice tire traction) | •Shovel                 |
| •Ice scrapper            | •Blankets                                    | •First Aid Kit          |
| •Flashlights & batteries | •Food & Water                                | •Chains or cable chains |
| •Weather/AM/FM radio     | •Warm Clothing                               |                         |

Also, how about these?

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| •Cell phone with emergency numbers | •Diapers and formula for small children |
| •Filled Tank of gas                | •Extra cash                             |

If you find yourself stranded or stuck, move off the roadway as much as possible so road crews and emergency vehicles can pass, stay with your vehicle, use your emergency flashers, call for help and wait until it arrives. And ensure your tires have plenty of tread throughout the season.

Visit [www.takewinterbystorm.org](http://www.takewinterbystorm.org) for more car and home winter preparedness checklists and tips!

**El Niño  
conditions  
are forecast  
this winter.**

## La Niña cont...

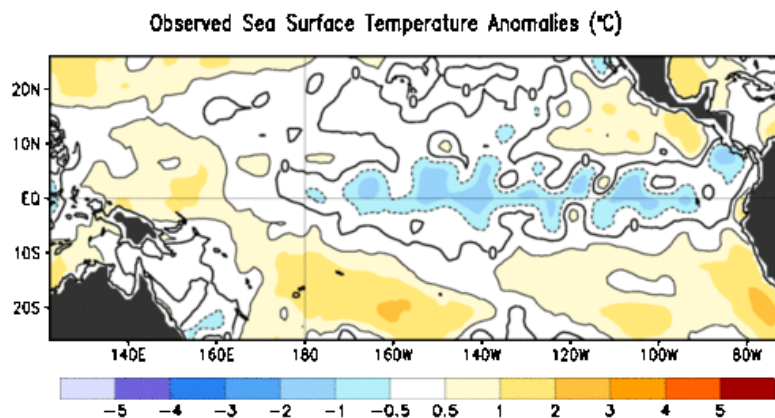
Cont from page 1... La Niña's also tend to bring our area increased odds on wind storms and lowland snow events, as well as flooding events. So far this fall, we've already had a few wind events mainly along the coast and north interior. We even had a taste of some lowland snow early in December.

Will lowland snow events, and more flooding or wind events be ahead? Well, the answer to that question remains as we head into the new year. Stay on top of expected weather by visiting our web site at [www.weather.gov/seattle](http://www.weather.gov/seattle).

Spotter reports are important during any hazardous weather events. Reports on strong winds, snow, heavy rainfall, flooding and landslides have already been received. Keep those reports coming!

Spotter reports help reinforce the warning message through media and web site outlets. Your local emergency management and emergency response officials such as power utilities, transit, and transportation departments also use your spotter reports for situation awareness and response prioritization.

So, have your spotter criteria sheet handy at home, in your car and at work. As



Observed Sea Surface Temperature Anomalies.  
Source: NWS Climate Prediction Center

noted in spotter training, be sure to put your spotter number on your critical sheet as well. When the weather happens, give us a call with your reports. Thanks!

# Spotter Trivia

Our area's weather is terrain driven and snowfall clearly follows that trend throughout Western Washington. Can you correctly match these communities with their average annual snowfall?

The answers can be found elsewhere in Skywarn Spotter News.

Elma	699"	Sequim	444"
Paradise	13"	Snoqualmie	6"
Forks	11"	Stampede Pass	5"
Arlington	7"		



Snow at Lizard Lake  
near Stampede Pass

## Pacific NW Weather Workshop

The next Pacific Northwest Weather Workshop is slated for March 3 and 4, at the NOAA Western Regional Center – Sand Point in Seattle. This annual event goes back to the mid-1980s and brings the region's weather community together to discuss a wide range of local weather topics.

The call for presentations and workshop registration information should be available just after the first of the year. Look for that information at

<https://www.atmos.washington.edu/pnww>



## SKYWARN Recognition Day

The 2016 SKYWARN Recognition Day event was held on Dec 2 and 3. This event began in the central U.S. in 1999 and has become a nationwide event, celebrating the contributions volunteer SKYWARN radio operators make to the National Weather Service. This year, over 100 NWS offices again participated in the event.

We had six volunteer radio operators work our NWS Seattle amateur radio workstation, operating on VHF and UHF. With permission, we used the K7MMI repeater system that reaches much of Western Washington. We had a total of over 65 contacts during the event. We shared current weather conditions and discussed the latest forecasts and other topics including the impending colder weather outbreaks and threat of lowland snow in Western Washington.

Thanks go to Doug and Elaine, Tammy and Trish, and Bill and Alan, as well as Ted Buehner who worked the NWS Seattle radio workstation (WX7SEA). Thanks also goes to NWS Seattle amateur radio program manager Jeff Michalski who helped make the arrangements prior to the event.

Hope you can participate in next year's SKYWARN Recognition Day!

Alan and Bill volunteering at  
WX7SEA for #SKYWARN16



## American Meteorological Society (AMS) Annual Meeting in Seattle

The AMS (American Meteorological Society) will hold its annual meeting in Seattle during January 23-27, 2017, at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center. Over 3000 meteorologists and weather enthusiasts from not only across the nation but from around the world will attend. A wide range of topics will be addressed, including satellite weather, radar, surface observations, weather modelling, significant events like heat, snow, tornadoes, and hurricanes, and much, much more. Ahead of the meeting's start is a public event called WeatherFest. WeatherFest will be on Sunday January 22nd again at the Convention Center from Noon to 4 PM. This event will offer a wide range of interactive exhibits for students, their families and friends, and those young at heart that enjoy weather. Come join the fun at the AMS WeatherFest on January 22, 2017!



## CoCoRaHS Update

Our wet season is here and we need more rainfall reporters across the region. Your data is valuable to us here at NWS along with the TV weather anchors and many others. We use CoCoRaHS reports to study precipitation variability across our geographically diverse area. Thanks for all the heavy rainfall reports from October and the lowland snow reports this December. If you haven't done so already, please check out [www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org) for more information about the CoCoRaHS program.



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## Climate Newsletter

The Office of the Washington State Climatologist produces a monthly weather summary that is available online or by email. To view OWSC's latest newsletter please visit:

[www.climate.washington.edu/newsletter](http://www.climate.washington.edu/newsletter)

## Feedback!

Your feedback is wanted! Please let us know ...

What would you like to see in future Skywarn newsletters?  
Additional spotter training?  
CoCoRaHS training?

Comments or questions?

Contact [jeff.michalski@noaa.gov](mailto:jeff.michalski@noaa.gov)

## Trivia Question Answers

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